

1. INTRODUCTION

Background

Seven states entirely prohibit hunting on Sunday and 4 states, including North Carolina, allow hunting on Sunday with some restrictions (National Rifle Association-Institute for Legislative Action n.d.). Hunting on Sunday is allowed in North Carolina on some federal installations. Prohibition of hunting on Sunday in North Carolina dates back to 1869. The current regulation that prohibits hunting on Sunday, General Statute 103-2, states, “If any person shall...hunt on Sunday, having with him a shotgun, rifle, or pistol, he shall be guilty of a Class 3 Misdemeanor” (North Carolina General Assembly n.d.:230). Seeing that hunters in other states are allowed to hunt on Sunday, some hunters in North Carolina question why their weekend hunting opportunities are limited only to Saturdays. Members of the General Assembly, other elected officials, and the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (WRC) staff often receive questions and requests from constituents regarding this issue (WRC 2005). However, other members of the public, including many hunters, strongly oppose the concept of hunting on Sunday. Prior to this report, no definitive study had been conducted in North Carolina regarding the attitudes of potential stakeholders, the financial costs and benefits of hunting on Sunday, or the potential impacts of hunting on Sunday on hunter recruitment and retention.

For these reasons, and in response to increasing legislative interest, the North Carolina General Assembly and North Carolina Governor Mike Easley requested in 2005 that the WRC coordinate a study investigating issues related to hunting on Sunday in North Carolina. Consequently, the WRC issued a request for proposals during August of 2005 seeking a contractor to explore stakeholder views on hunting on Sunday, estimate potential impacts of hunting on Sunday on hunter recruitment and retention, and estimate the costs and benefits of hunting on Sunday for the WRC and the North Carolina economy.

The WRC selected a proposal submitted by Responsive Management, Inc., a public opinion and attitude survey research firm specializing in natural resource and outdoor recreation issues located in Harrisonburg, VA. The proposal outlined a cooperative effort between Responsive Management, the Virginia Tech Department of Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences, Virginia Tech’s Conservation Management Institute, and Southwick and Associates (a research firm specializing in natural resource economics) to complete the study.

This report summarizes the results of this cooperative effort. The study entailed a process of identifying and collecting preliminary information from stakeholders (conducted by Virginia Tech), focus groups of North Carolina residents and stakeholders such as hunters and clergy (conducted by Responsive Management and Virginia Tech), a survey of hunters (conducted by Virginia Tech), a telephone survey of North Carolina residents (conducted by Responsive Management), an economic analysis (conducted by Responsive Management/Southwick and Associates), and an assessment of the potential impacts to the Commission itself (conducted by Virginia Tech). Information gathered from the investigation will be used by the Governor and the General Assembly to determine an appropriate course of action on whether to adopt some form of hunting on Sunday in North Carolina.